

WINNIPEG PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

(OF THE MEN'S MUSICAL CLUB LIMITED)

P R E S E N T S

"The Canterbury Pilgrims"

By GEORGE DYSON

(Being selected portraits from the Prologue to Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales")

CONDUCTOR—JAMES ROBERTSON

SOLOISTS

OLGA IRWIN - - - - } Sopranos
CONSTANCE STEFANIK }

STEUART WILSON, Tenor

STANLEY HOBAN, Baritone

FULL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

(Concert Master, JOHN WATERHOUSE)

(Choir Accompanist, FILMER E. HUBBLE)

WINNIPEG CIVIC AUDITORIUM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 1940

NINE O'CLOCK P.M.

I. PROLOGUE

(SEMI-CHORUS)

When that April with his showers sweet
The drought of March hath pierced to the
root,
And bathed every vein in such moisture
Of which virtue engendered is the flower;
When Zephyr eke with his sweet breath
Inspired hath in every holt and heath
The tender branches, and the young sun
Hath in Ram's sign his half course run,
And small birds make melody
That sleep all night with open eye,—
So worketh nature in their hearts,—
Then folk do long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmers for to seek strange strands,
To far saints, known in sundry lands;
And specially, from every shire's end
Of England, to Canterbury they wend,

The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen when they were sick.

(TENOR)

Befell that in that season on a day,
In Southwark at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with full devout courage,
At night there came into that hostelry
Well nine-and-twenty in a company,
Of sundry folk, by chauce together come
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury would ride.
The chambers and the stables were wide,
And well were we lodged at the best.
And shortly, when the sun was come to rest,
So had I spoken with them everyone,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made agreement early for to rise,
To take our way, there as I you devise.

But none the less, while I have time and
space,
Ere that I further in this story pace,
Methinketh it according to reason
To tell you all the condition
Of each of them, so as it seemed me,
And which they were and of what degree,
And eke of what array that they were in;
And at a knight then will I first begin.

II. THE KNIGHT

(CHORUS)

A Knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the time that he first began
To ride abroad, he loved chivalry,
Truth and honour, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his Lord's war,
And thereto had he ridden, no man further,
As well in Christendom as in heathen lands,

And ever honoured for his worthiness.
 At Alexandria was he when it was won;
 In Granada at the siege eke had he been
 Of Algecir, and ridden in Benmarin.
 At Layas was he, and at Attalia,
 When it was won; and in the Great Sea
 At many a noble landing had he been.
 At mortal battles had he been fifteen,
 And fought for our faith at Tramezene
 In lists thrice, and ever slain his foe.
 This same worthy knight had been also
 Some time with the Lord of Palathia
 Against another heathen in Turkey;
 And evermore he had a sovereign prize.
 And though that he were worthy, he was wise,
 And bore himself as meek as is a maid.
 He never yet a villainy had said,
 In all his life, unto no manner wight.
 He was a very perfect, gentle knight.

III. THE SQUIRE

(TENOR)
 With him there was his son, a young Squire,
 A lover, and a lusty bachelor,
 With locks aurl as they were laid in press.
 Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
 Of his stature he was of even length,
 And wonderly active and great of strength;
 And he had been sometime in cavalry,
 In Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardy,
 And borne him well, and in so short a space,
 In hope of favour by his lady's grace.
 Embroidered was he, as it were a mead
 All full of fresh flowers white and red;
 Singing he was or fluting, all the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown, with sleeves long and wide.
 Well could he sit on horse and finely ride.
 He could make songs and well indite,
 Joust and eke dance, and well portray and write.
 So hot he loved, he slept by night
 No more than doth a nightingale.
 Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
 And carved before his father at the table.

IV. THE NUN

(SOPRANO)
 There was also a Nun, a Prioress,
 That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
 And she was called Madame Eglantine.
 Full well she sang the services divine,
 Entuned in her nose full seemly,
 And Norman-French she spake, full fair and skilfully.
 At meat well taught was she withal,
 She let no morsel from her lips fall,
 Nor wet her fingers in her sauces deep.
 Well could she carry a morsel and well keep,
 That no drop fell upon her breast;
 In courtesy was set full much her pleasure.
 Full daintily after her meat she reached,
 And certainly she was of gay desport,
 And full pleasant and amiable of port,
 And took pains to follow the ways
 Of Court, and stately was of manner,
 And to be held worthy of reverence.
 But for to speak of her conscience,
 She was so charitable and pitiful
 She would weep if that she saw a mouse
 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
 Of small hounds had she that she fed
 With roasted flesh, or milk and wheaten bread;
 But sore wept she if one of them were dead,
 Or if men smote it with a stick smartly,
 And all was conscience and tender heart.
 Full seemly her wimple crinkled was;
 Her nose well formed, her eyes grey as glass,
 Her mouth full small and thereto soft and red,
 But certainly she had a fair forehead;
 It was almost a span broad I trow,
 For, surely, she was not undergrown.
 Full handsome was her cloak as I was ware.
 Of small corals about her arm she bare
 A string of beads with gaudies all of green,
 And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen,

On which there was first writ a crowned A,
 And after AMOR VINCIT OMNIA.

V. THE MONK

(BARITONE)
 A Monk there was, and likely to be master,
 A bold rider that loved hunting,
 A manly man, to be an Abbot able.
 Full many a dainty horse had he in stable,
 And when he rode men might his bridle hear
 Jingling in the whistling wind as clear
 And eke as loud as doth the chapel bell,
 Where that this lord was Prior of his cell.
 The rule of Saint Maurice or Saint Benedict,
 Because that it was old and some deal strict,
 This monk let old things pass and chose the new.

He gave not for that text a plucked hen
 That saith that hunters be not holy men,
 Nor that a monk when he is reckless
 Is likened to a fish that is waterless,
 That is to say, a monk out of his cloister.
 But that same text he held not worth an oyster;
 And I said his opinion was good.
 Why should he study and make himself mad,
 Upon a book in cloister always poring,
 Or toil with his hands and labour
 As Austin bade? how shall the world be served?

Let Austin have his toil to him reserved.
 Therefore he was a horseman bold aright;
 Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl in flight;
 Of spurring and hunting for the hare
 Was all his lust, for no cost would he spare.
 I saw his sleeves a-ruffled at the hand
 With fur, and that the finest in the land.
 And for to fasten his hood under his chin
 He had of gold wrought a curious pin;
 A love-knot in the greater end there was.
 His head was bald and shone as any glass,
 And eke his face as it had been anoint.
 He was a lord full fat and in great point;
 His eyes were bright and rolling in his head,
 That gleamed like a fire beneath a pot;
 His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.
 He was not pale as a tormented ghost;
 A fat swan loved he best of any roast;
 His boots were supple, his horse in great estate.

Now certainly he was a fair prelate.

VI. THE CLERK OF OXENFORD

(SEMI-CHORUS)
 There was a Clerk of Oxenford
 That unto logic long had gone,
 As lean was his horse as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake,
 But looked hollow and thereto soberly;
 Full threadbare was his cape;
 For he had got him yet no benefice,
 Nor was so worldly for to have office;

(CHORUS)
 For he would rather have at his bed's head
 Twenty books clad in blaek or red
 Of Aristotile and his philosophy,
 That robes rich, or fiddle, or gay psaltery;
 But all be that he was a philosopher,
 Yet had he but little gold in coffer;
 But all that he might of his friends borrow,
 On books and his learning he it spent,
 And busily began for the souls to pray
 Of them that gave him wherewith to study.
 Of study took he most care and most heed,
 Not a word spake he more than was need,
 And that was said in form and reverence
 And short and quick, and full of high sense.
 Tending to moral virtue was his speech
 And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.

VII. THE HABERDASHER AND HIS FRATERNITY THE MERCHANT

(TENOR)
 An Haberdasher, and a Carpenter,
 A Weaver, a Dyer, and a Tapestry-maker,—
 And they were clothed all in one livery
 Of a solemn and great fraternity;

Full fresh and new their gear appointed was;
 Their knives were capped not with brass,
 But all with silver, wrought full clean and well,

Their girdles and their pouches every whit.
 Well seemed each of them a fair burgess
 To sit in a guildhall, on a dais.
 Each one for the wisdom that he knew
 Was shapely for to be an alderman.
 For chattels had they enough and rent,
 And eke their wives would it well assent;
 It is full fair to be called *madame*
 And go to vespers walking all before,
 And have a mantle royally borne.

A Cook they had with them for the nonee,
 To boil the chickens with the marrowbones,
 And sauces sweet and savoury;
 Well could he know a draught of London ale;
 He could roast and seeth and boil and fry,
 Make a stew and well bake a pie.

(CHORUS)

A Merchant was there with a forked beard,
 In motley and high on horse he sat.
 Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat.
 His opinions he spake full solemnly,
 Tending alway to the increase of his winning.

He would the sea were kept free at any cost
 Betwixt Middleburg and his river Orwell.
 Well on exchange could he sell crowns.
 This worthy man full well had used his wit,
 There could no man call him a debtor,
 So stately was he of his governance
 With his bargains and with his borrowings.
 Forsooth he was a worthy man withal.

INTERMISSION

VIII. THE SERGEANT OF THE LAW THE FRANKLIN*

(BARITONE)
 A Sergeant of the Law, wary and wise,
 There was also, full rich of excellence.
 Discreet he was and of great reverence;
 He seemed such, his words were so wise.
 Justice he was full often in Assize,
 By patent and by full commission;
 For his science and for his high renown,
 Of fees and robes had he many a one;
 So great a purchaser was nowhere none.
 All was fee-simple to him in effect,
 His purchasing might not be undone.
 Nowhere so busy a man as he there was,
 And yet he seemed busier than he was.
 In set terms had he eases and dooms all
 That from the time of King William had fallen;
 Thereto could he indite and make a deed,
 There could no wight eavail at his writing;
 And every statute knew he all by rote.
 He rode but homely in a medley coat.

A Franklin was in his company.
 White was his beard as is a daisy,
 Of his complexion he was sanguine.
 Well loved he in the morning a sop in wine;
 To live in delight was ever his wont,
 For he was Epicurus' own son,
 That held opinion that full delight
 Was verily felicity perfect.
 An householder, and that a great, was he;
 Open to all that came in his country;
 His bread, his ale, was always of the best;
 A better cellared man was nowhere none.
 Without baked meat was never his house,
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,
 It snowed in his house of meat and drink.
 Of every dainty that man could think,
 After the sundry seasons of the year,
 So changed he his meat and his supper.
 Full many a fat partridge had he in coop,
 And many a breem and many a luee in stew.
 Woe was his cook if his sauces were not
 Poignant and sharp and ready all his gear.
 His table fixed in his hall alway,
 Stood ready covered all the livelong day.
 At sessions there was he lord and sire;
 Full oft-times he was knight of the shire.

*Franklin—a freehold landowner.

A cutlass, and a pouch all of silk,
Hung at his girdle white as morning milk;
A Sheriff had he been and an Auditor.
Was nowhere such a worthy proprietor.

IX. THE SHIPMAN

(CHORUS)

A Shipman was there, dwelling far by west.
For aught I wot he was of Dartmouth.
He rode upon a rouncey* as he could
In a gown of coarse cloth to the knee.
A dagger hanging upon a cord had he
About his neck under his arm adown.
The hot summer had made his hue all brown,
And certainly he was a good fellow.
Full many a draught of wine had he drawn
From Bordeauxward while that the merchant
slept.

Of tender conscience took he no heed.
If that he fought, and had the upper hand,
By water he sent them home to every land.
But of his craft to reckon well his tides,
His currents and his dangers him besides,
His harbour and his moon, his pilotage,
There was none such from Hull to Carthage.
Hardy he was and wise to undertake;
With many a tempest had his beard been
shake;
He knew well all the havens, as they were
From Gothland to the Cape of Finisterre,
And every creek in Britain and in Spain.
His barque was called the Magdalen.

*Rouncey—a hired horse.

X. THE DOCTOR OF PHYSIC

(TENOR)

With us there was a Doctor of Physic;
In all this world there was none to him like,
To speak of physick and surgery;
For he was grounded in astrology.
He watched his patient a full great deal,
Following the stars by magic natural.
Well could he foretell the ascendant,
And figure the constellations for his patient.
He knew the cause of every malady,
Were it of hot, or cold, or moist, or dry,
And where they engendered and of what
humour;

He was a very perfect practiser.
The cause known and of its harm the root,
Anon he gave the sick man remedy.
Full ready had he his apothecaries
To send him drugs and his electuaries,
For each of them made other for to win,
Their friendship was no new thing to begin.
Well knew he the old Aesculapius,
Old Hippocrates, Hali, and Galen,
Averrhoes, John of Damascus, and Con-
stantine.

His study was but little on the Bible.
Of his diet moderate was he,
For it was of no superfluity,
But of great nourishing and digestible.
In scarlet and in blue he clad was all,
Lined with taffeta and sendal silk.
And yet he was but careful of dispense,
He kept all that he won in pestilence.
For gold in physick is a cordial,
Therefore he loved gold in special.

XI. THE WIFE OF BATH

(SOPRANO)

A good wife was there of beside Bath,
But she was some deal deaf, and that was
scaith.*
Of clothmaking she had such a skill
Excelling them of Ypres and Ghent.
In all the parish, wife there was none
That to the offering before her should go,
And if there did, certain so wrath was she,
That she out of all charity.
Her coverchiefs full fine were of ground,—
I durst swear they weighed ten pound,—
That on a Sunday were upon her head.
Her hosen were of a fine scarlet red
Full straightly tied, and shoes full soft and
new;

*Scaith—a pity.

Bold was her face and fair and red of hue.
She was a worthy woman all her life,
Husbands at church door she had five,
Beside other company in youth;
Thrice had she been at Jerusalem;
She had passed many a strange stream;
At Rome had she been and at Boulogne,
To St. James in Galicia and at Cologne.
She knew much of wandering by the way.
Gate-toothed was she, soothly for to say.
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Simplified full well and on her head an hat
As broad as is a buckler or a target;
An over-skirt hung from her hips large,
And on her feet a pair of spurs sharp.
In company well could she laugh and chat;
Of remedies of love she knew perchance,
For she knew of that art the ancient dance.

XII. THE POOR PARSON OF A TOWN

(CHORUS)

A good man was there of religion
And was a poor Parson of a Town;
But rich he was in holy thought and work;
He was a learned man, a clerk,
That Christ's gospel truly would preach:
His parish-folk devoutly would he teach.
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patient;
Full loth was he to curse for his tithes,
But rather would he give, without a doubt,
Unto his poor parish-folk about,
Of his offering and eke of his substance:
He could with little stock have sufficiency.
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
But he stayed not for rain or thunder,
In sickness nor in mischief to visit
The farthest in his parish, great or little,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.

(SEMI-CHORUS)

This noble ensample to his sheep he gave
That first he wrought and afterward he
taught.

Out of the gospel he those words caught.

(CHORUS)

He did not set his benefice to hire
And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire,
And run to London unto Saint Paul's
To seek for himself a chantry for souls;
Or with a brotherhood to be withdrawn,
But dwelt at home and kept well his fold,
So that the wolf not made it to miscarry,—
He was a shepherd and not a mercenary.
And though he holy was and virtuous,
He was to sinful man not despitous,
Nor of his speech difficult nor lofty,
But in his teaching discreet and benign,
To draw folk to Heaven by fairness,
By good ensample, this was his business:
But were it any person obstinate,
What so he were, of high or low estate,
Him would he chasten sharply for the nonce.
A better priest I trow that nowhere none is;
He waited after no pomp and reverence,
Nor made him a light conscience,
But Christ's lore, and his Apostles twelve,
He taught, but first he followed it himself.

XIII. L'ENVOI

(TENOR)

But now is time to you for to tell
How that we bare us that very night,
When we were in that hostelry alight;
Great cheer made our Host us everyone,
And to the supper set he us anon,
And served us with victual of the best;
Strong was the wine and well to drink us
pleased.

(CHORUS)

A seemly man our Host was withal
For to have been a marshal in a hall.
A large man he was with eyes bright,
A fairer burghess was there none in Cheap.
Bold of his speech, and wise and well taught
And of manhood him lacked right naught.
Eke thereto he was right a merry man,
And after supper to speak of mirth began,
And said thus:

(BARITONE):

'Now, lordings, truly,
Ye be to me right welcome heartily;
For by my troth, if that I shall not lie,
I have not seen this year so merry a com-
pany;
Fain would I make you mirth, wist I how.
And of a plan I am now right bethought.
Ye go to Canterbury—God you speed—
The blissful martyr quit you your meed!
And well I wot, as ye go by the way
Ye set yourselves to tell tales and to jest;
For truly comfort and mirth there is none
To ride by the way dumb as a stone;
And therefore will I make to you disport,
And if you like it all, by one assent,
Now for to stand at my judgment,
Tomorrow, when ye ride by the way,
Be ye not merry, smite off my head.'

(CHORUS)

Our counsel was not long for to seek,
And granted him without more ado,
And bade him say his verdict as he pleased.

(BARITONE)

'Lordings, now hearken for the best,
This is the point, to speak it short and plain,
That each of you to shorten you the way,
In this voyage shall tell tales twain,
Of adventures that once had befallen.
And which of you beareth him best of all
Shall have a supper at the cost of all
When we come again from Canterbury.
And, for to make you the more merry,
I will myself gladly with you ride.'

(CHORUS)

This thing was granted, and our oaths
sworn

And thereupon the wine was fetched anon;
We drank, and to rest went each one.

The morrow, when that day began for to
spring,

Up rose our Host and waked us all,
And gathered us together all in a flock,
And forth we rode, at a foot-pace,
Unto the fountain of St. Thomas;
And there our Host began his horse to
arrest,
And said:

(BARTONE)

'Lordings, hearken if you will,
Let see now who shall tell the first tale.
As ever I may drink wine or ale,
Whoso is rebel to my judgment
Shall pay for all that by the way is spent!
Now draw lots, ere that we farther wend;
He that hath the shortest shall begin.
Sir Knight, my master and my lord,
Now draw a lot, for that is my award.
Come near, my lady Prioress,
And ye, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,
Nay, study not; lay hand to it, every man.'

(CHORUS)

Anon to draw every wight began,
And, shortly for to tell as it was,
Were it by fortune, hazard, or chance,
The lot fell to the Knight.
Of which full blithe and glad was every
wight.

And when this good man saw that it was so,
He said:

(TENOR)

'Since I shall begin the game,
Welcome be the lot, in God's name!
Now let us ride, and hearken what I say.'

(CHORUS)

And with that word we riden forth our way,
And he began with right a merry cheer,
His tale anon, and said in this manner.

(THE KNIGHT'S TALE)

(TENOR)

'Long since, as old stories tell us,
There was a duke that hight Theseus;
Of Athens was he lord and governor,
And in his time such a conqueror'

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